THEATRE World

MAR. 1935

Scenes from:

"A Kind of Folly"
"Saint Joan"
"Richard II"
"The Talk of the Town"

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(P.349)

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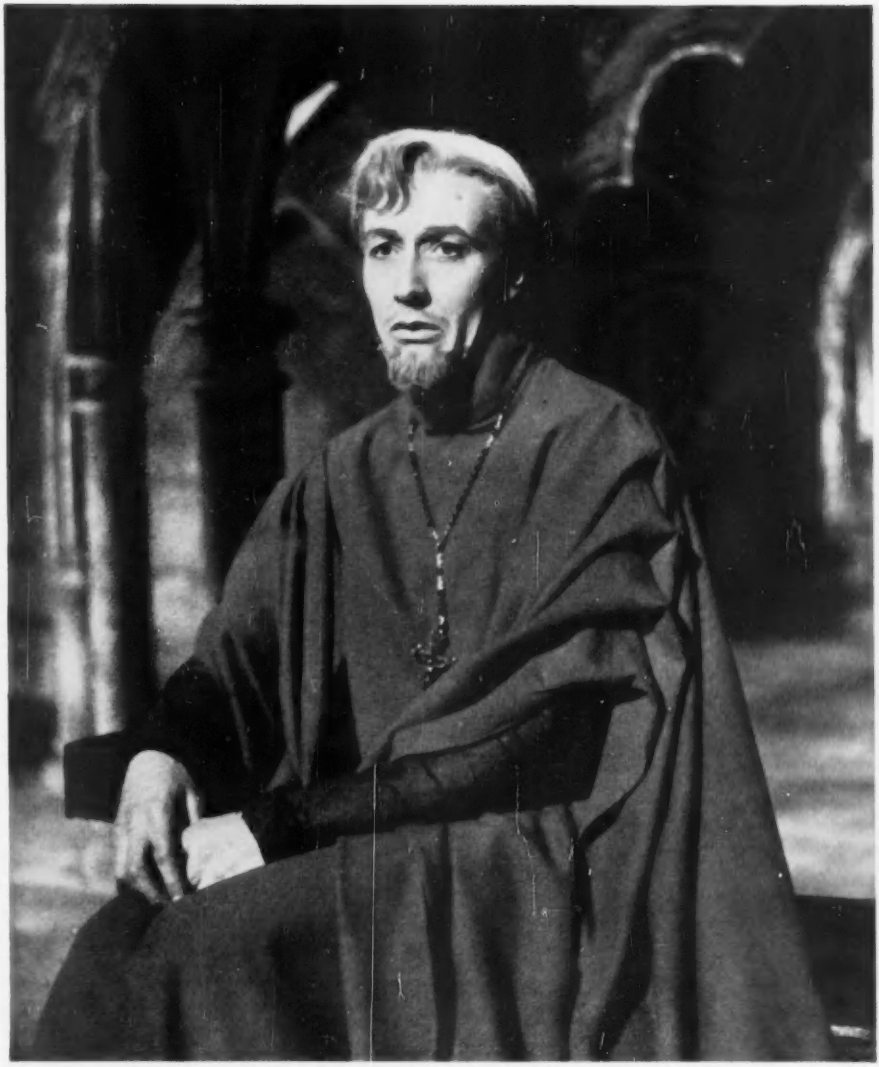

John Neville as Richard II

John Neville has created his biggest rôle to date as Richard in the current Old Vic season. Further scenes from Michael Benthall's production appear later in this issue, as well as an interesting account of this rising young actor's career to date.

(Portrait by Houston-Rogers)

Photograph by Angus McBean

"I make sure of good sleep by drinking Ovaltine"

SAYS CORAL BROWNE

CORAL BROWNE *writes:*

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P.967A

THEATRE WORLD Vol. LI No. 362

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Over the Footlights

THE unprecedented lull which followed Christmas has been broken by three new plays, two of which were an immediate success, and it is good to welcome back to the West End Philip King, a playwright who knows all the tricks of the trade. Playgoers will remember his *On Monday Next* . . . which had a long West End run and has been very popular with repertories and amateur societies ever since. Now he has the fairly unique experience of seeing two of his plays triumph in London on succeeding days, which is the more remarkable since one is a serious play and the other (written in collaboration with Falkland L. Cary) a full-blooded comedy. A review of *Sailor Beware* appears in this issue and *Serious Charge* will be fully reviewed next month. Incidentally, these plays brought success to several players unknown to London audiences, notably Peggy Mount.

We make no apology for selecting *A Kind of Folly* as our main feature this month. Here is a play by a new young playwright which, though there are weaknesses, contains sufficient charm and skill in dialogue to give great promise for the future. *A Kind of Folly* had a mixed reception from the critics after the West End opening, after enjoying a successful pre-London tour, but on the second night at the Duchess the audience responded well to the gentle if stylised humour of this comedy in the Edwardian manner. This is not the first play Mr. Holder has written and we hope he will not be discouraged. Produced too late for review, in addition to *Serious Charge*, are *Wonderful Town*, the American musical at the Princes, and the revival of Behrman's *The Second Man* by the new company at the New Lindsey Theatre. *The Second Man*, it will be remembered, had its original production over here at the Playhouse in 1928.

A new show came to the New Watergate Theatre on 28th February for a limited run. This is *Love is News*, a comedy with music by Louis Ducreux, adapted by Diana Morgan and Robert McDermot for the English stage from the original *L'Amour en Papier*.

The unusual action of *Love is News* takes place within the pages of a newspaper. Under the spell of an Indian fakir, "Boy," a champion cyclist, on the front page, comes to life to commence a frenzied search for "Girl," a society lass, on the back page. Boy's travels take him through the various sections of the paper.

The cast of the comedy, which is directed by Norman Marshall (with décor by Ian Emmerson), includes Graham Payn, Patricia Cree, Gerald Cross, Walter Horsbrugh, Sonya Cordeau, Madi Hedd, Bernadette Milnes and Guy Verney.

Choreography is by Gilbert Vernon, a principal dancer with the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet.

Antonio, the famous Spanish dancer, is now at the Palace with his company for a season.

A new production of *The Magic Flute* was given on 24th February at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, and *As You Like It*, the fifth play of the Old Vic season, opened on 1st March. F.S.

Cover Portrait: Flora Robson in *A Kind of Folly*.

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New Shows Reviewed

" The Tragedy of King Richard II "

(Theatre Royal, Stratford, E.15)

UNFORTUNATELY, when this notice appears it will be too late to urge readers to go to Stratford on the Central Line for the fullest exposition of the case of Richard II that the theatre can show. It remains to record that Joan Littlewood's simple, bare and poignantly revealing production had enthralling quality and that Harry Corbett in the part of Richard displayed deep understanding of the character and with great artistic ability interpreted it with a variety which never ran counter to the inner consistency of the part of a ruler mentally unbalanced from the beginning of the play. Mr. Corbett was properly theatrical in externalising the mind of a real man and it was noteworthy how exactly Shakespeare's words express a condition of mind which is so grave a problem with us today. The actor interpreted the character through the malady, making it sadly familiar to our understanding whilst keeping it in period.

The supporting company showed considerable competence and mention should be made of the work of Howard Goorney as " time-honoured Gaunt " and in other parts and of that of Barbara Brown as the Queen. The presentation was mean but money is wanting. To send Richard into Westminster Hall in sackcloth before his actual deposition seemed carrying economy rather too far. At the close of the performance Miss Littlewood begged and pleaded for support, spoke of the work her devoted company is doing in the production of fine plays in a poor district and reached with some propriety towards the mantle of Miss Baylis. All lovers of good theatre should certainly pay a visit to Stratford-atte-Bow. H.G.M.

" Vicious Circle " *(New Watergate)*

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S " metaphysical melodrama," *Huis Clos*, adapted by Joan Swinstead from a translation by Marjorie Gabain, was revived on 1st February. Any drama depicts suffering but this one presents Hell, and its never-ending nature is insisted upon. In a Second Empire drawing-room, two women and a man, each with a thick streak of cruelty, are destined to make eternity unpleasant for each other. The man, Garcin, is tormented with a bitter desire to amend his own nature. He may be said to hunger for righteousness. He is still concerned with his earthly reputation. This obsession prevents him from making love with Estelle, but she persists in her attraction, and the attempt, which satisfies neither of them, merely tortures the Lesbian, Inez. Thus Hell's economy works.

M. Sartre's skill in construction here is generally recognised. Whether we were jaded or forewarned, the play seemed less disgusting than when it was performed over eight years ago with blasting brilliance at the Arts Theatre. Here, at the Watergate, the players did not spare themselves. There was no relaxation in their physical and mental control for nearly 1½ hours. It was enough. One admired their powers. As Garcin, Hugh Burden gave a really probing performance. It is a weakness in the writing that he was able to attract some sympathy. Faith Brook gave a hard, austere but sufficient indication of the character of Inez and Pat Sandys bravely betrayed to us that of Estelle. The attendant, garbed like a prison-warder, was played by Eric Dodson with the necessary level nonchalance. The direction was by Joan Kemp-Welch. H.G.M.

(Continued overleaf)

" **Richard II** "—Theatre Royal, Stratford, 17th January. *(See also page 12.)*
" **Vicious Circle** "—New Watergate, 1st February.
" **Saint Joan** "—St. Martin's, 8th February. *(See also pages 24-26.)*
" **The Ghost Writers** "—Arts, 9th February.
" **Podrecca's Piccoli Theatre** "—Saville, 11th February.
" **The Other Animals** "—Theatre Royal, Stratford, 15th February.
" **A Kind of Folly** "—Duchess, 16th February. *(See pages 17-23.)*
" **Sailor Beware** "—Strand, 17th February.

Faith Brook who was last seen in the West End in 1954 in Charles Morgan's " The Burning Glass."

Joan Greenwood

who stars in "The Moon and the Chimney," the new romantic comedy by Ladislas Fodor which is having a great success on its pre-London tour, and is due in the West End in mid-March. Henry Sherek presents the play, which is directed by John Fernald, with décor by Hutchinson Scott.

"Saint Joan" *(St. Martin's)*

A DEBT of gratitude is owed to Henry Sherek for bringing this Arts Theatre revival of Shaw's great play to a wider public.

No "Joan" that we can recall seeing has struck a note of greater conviction, and no accent has sat so naturally upon the peasant maid as this soft Irish brogue. More than that, Siobhan McKenna spans the gap between practical and spiritual with the ease of inspiration. This Joan did hear voices—we have no doubt about it, yet she belonged to the soil, had the country girl's uninhibited ways and was clearly capable both of leading an army of rough soldiers and of persuading the civilised poetry-loving Dunois of her supernatural powers. This must inevitably be the greatest performance of the year.

It was not to be expected that the other performances would rival Miss McKenna's unique interpretation. Several were disappointing, but on the whole the key characters were worthily presented, notably the Inquisitor of Charles Lloyd Pack—a sinister and persuasive exponent of the Institution Deified; the Warwick of Douglas Wilmer, Kenneth Williams' Dauphin and David March's Stogumber. The major disappointment was Robert Cartland's Dunois. A newcomer to the cast, Mr. Cartland failed utterly to convey the Gallic temperament of the man, which was surprising remembering his clever performance in *I am a Camera*.

Paul Mayo's settings are confirmed in their great effectiveness for a small stage, and John Fernald is to be congratulated on his masterly direction. Never has the Epilogue fitted so surely into the pattern.

F.S.

(See also pages 24-26)

"The Ghost Writers" *(Arts)*

THIS new play by Ted Allan, a Canadian writer, is, we take it, both an indictment of Hollywood methods, and of the spirit of witch-hunting which threatened to undermine America's true libertarian outlook. In the end neither aspect of the play carried full conviction, though Mr. Allan has a facile pen, and with more discipline can be expected in the near future to give us a lively and convincing drama.

(Continued on page 10)

Podrecca's Piccoli Theatre

makes a most welcome return to London for a season at the Saville Theatre. Among the "company" none is more popular than Maestro Piccolowsky, who is seen on the left taking a bow, and who has been delighting audiences with his antics at the piano for many years.

"The Night of the Ball"

● **SCENES from the new play by Michael Burn which is presented by Stephen Mitchell and Ethel Reiner at the New Theatre. An outstanding cast has been assembled for this play, which was reviewed last month, and not the least attraction is the superb décor by Loudon Sainthill. The play is directed by Joseph Losey.**

Pictures by Armstrong Jones

Above left: Sir Richard Alleyn (Robert Harris) with Margaret Tollemache (Wendy Hiller), the young widow he wants to marry. But during the evening Margaret meets her former lover, the father of her son, and many complications ensue.

Above: Other guests at the fantastically lavish ball Sir Richard is giving in an attempt to recapture the glories of the past, are, *L to R*: Lady Yarmouth (Gladys Cooper), Sidney Willis, M.P. (Edward Mulhare), Julian Lovell (Tony Britton).

Left: Sir Richard's niece Helen (Jill Bennett) in a gay moment with Julian, with whom she has fallen in love.

George Coulouris

who was recently seen in Odets's "The Big Knife," another scathing play about the Hollywood background.

New Shows Reviewed *(Contd.)*

The Ghost Writers *(Contd.)*

Mike Bedford (Jerry Stovin) is a young Canadian (whose dream city is Montreal), who comes to Hollywood with his young wife with the idea of making quick money as a script writer. He is involved with film producer Paul Finch (George Coulouris), who, we are given to understand, is what we may expect to meet as the inevitable result of the fabulous film city's greed and graft. Mike finds himself "ghosting" for a brilliant writer, Nick Lovell (Gordon Tanner), who has been sent to Coventry by the film colony's moguls for refusing to toe the line in an un-American activities case, though patently no Communist. Mike becomes a friend of Nick's, and his involvement, though innocent, in the veiled persecution of the young American writer, finally opens his eyes to the fundamental rottenness of the film capital.

Most dominating character is, as one might expect, Mr. Finch, given explosive loquacity by George Coulouris, whose verbal mannerisms, however, tended to overcolour the picture and render this product of Hollywood almost unbelievable.

Jerry Stovin and Gordon Tanner as the young writers gave sincere performances, and Andrée Melly had a charming, youthful freshness as Mike's wife, Julie, who never for one moment fell for the Hollywood lure. Jill Melford was also well in the picture as Nick's wisecracking, disillusioned wife, Marge, who finds her husband's fight for his liberal principles difficult to sympathise with, particularly in the face of approaching motherhood.

There was no lack of speed in Bernard Braden's production, and Paul Mayo's sets were colourfully garish. F.S.

Podrecca's Piccoli Theatre *(Saville)*

THESE entrancing marionettes will always have a welcome, and we shall never cease to wonder at the immense skill which goes into the making of this lovable entertainment. The timing is split-second,, and besides the dexterity of the manipulators, there is the asset of splendid singers, without whose co-operation many of the numbers would lose much of their charm.

Most ambitious of the items are the tableau from the opera *Ali-Baba*; the *Carnival of Venice; Naples by Moonlight; The Good Old Days*, and *Submarine Theatre*, a scintillating underwater scene. But it is the solitary performers who most tug at the heart strings: Bil-Bol-Bul, the little negro acrobat; Biscromio Scarmighati, the violinist; Sibilio Pifferetti and his wonderful dog, Salterel, and last but not least, the immortal Maestro Piccolowsky. These are unforgettable personalities. Their humour belongs

In the News

Betty Paul and David Tomlinson in a scene from that uproarious farce "All for Mary," which reaches its two hundredth performance at the Duke of York's Theatre on 3rd March. Harold Brooke and Kay Bannerman, the authors, have a new comedy "The Call of the Dodo" due for production in the early spring, which Henry Sherek is also presenting. *Left:* A new portrait of Anne Rogers, star of "The Boy Friend," the musical comedy of the 1920's at Wyndham's Theatre. The show opened on 14th January 1954. Bookings extend until next Boxing Day.

"Wonderful Town"

Shani Wallis as Eileen and Pat Kirkwood as Ruth sing "Ohio" in the successful American musical which opened at the Princes on 23rd February, too late for review this month. Based on the comedy, "My Sister Eileen," by Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorev, which was in turn based on short stories by Ruth McKenney (seen in London at the Savoy in 1943), "Wonderful Town" is directed by Fichard Bird. Others in the cast are Dennis Bowen, Sidney James and David Hurst.

(Picture by Houston-Rogers)

to no time or nation, which is why Vittorio Podrecca and his company have for so many years now brought delight to every corner of the globe. F.S.

"The Other Animals"

(Theatre Royal, Stratford)

"LIFE won't bear thinking about, dearie, that it won't," as a character in one of Mr. Sladen Smith's plays sadly opined, but Ewan MacColl is one of those courageous souls who will think about it and one of the fearful results is *The Other Animals*, which had its London première on 15th February. The discarded label of Expressionism applies to this play, in which a doomed political prisoner rhetorically talks with his externalised soul in a décor of scaffolding and stark, bare walls. It is natural for the young to rebel. Equally, it is in nature for the old to uphold tradition. Tragedy enfolds those, such as the play's hero, who in early middle age are caught on the bend, regarded by authority as dangerous and treated accordingly at the time of life when inner re-adjustment is due and doubt challenges.

The author gave a powerful performance as the prisoner, tortured and tired, a mind at the end of its tether, questioning, challenging, affirming and denying, until his enraged captor shot the life out of him. Harry Corbett, as the prisoner's alter ego, alternatively sombre and buoyant, by his arresting attitudes and vocal quality made a strong impression. His captor was projected with steely intensity by Barry Clayton. Joan Littlewood produced. H.G.M.

"Sailor Beware" *(Strand)*

THIS old-fashioned kitchen comedy on the theme of relations being best apart is made very refreshing by some good touches of what is best in human nature and by the apparently spontaneous treatment it receives at the hands of a gifted company. For long, indeed, sailors have been sure of a good reception on the English stage and the authors of this comedy, Philip King and Falkland Cary, have turned this to very good account.

A sailor brought up in an orphanage has a nasty shock when he is given a taste of family life in a good home. Mrs. Hornett's awful dominion is established in the first few minutes but the play stands still whilst the situation is underlined. Seeing what marriage with the girl of his heart would resolve into with such a mother-in-law living three doors away, the sailor stays away and leaves the bridal party "waiting at the Church." Things are finally sorted out by a minister of religion whose lines do not rise to the habit of his cloth nor to the quality of the actor, Anthony Marlowe.

The dialogue throughout is not witty but but it bubbles with character and the homely humours of the play are received with rapture. Humour and sentiment are not left unmixed. We laugh at and with these people and all the time our hearts go out to them. The company fit the play perfectly. In particular, Peggy Mount has a wonderful voice and carries all the guns required in the part of the domineering matron, and Ann Wilton excites laughter and engages affection as her sentimental foil. H.G.M.

Above left: The Duke of York (Joby Blanshard) with the dying John of Gaunt (Howard Goorney). *Above right*: The deposition scene, with Harry Corbett as Richard and George Cooper as Henry Bolingbroke. *Below left*: The Queen (Barbara Brown) bids farewell to her husband; and *below right*, the assassination of King Richard in the dungeon at Pomfret.

Theatre Workshop's

"Richard II"

● Great interest attached to the production of Shakespeare's play at the Theatre Royal, Stratford, E., the day before the Old Vic's "Richard II." The play was directed by Joan Littlewood with settings by John Bury and costumes by Josephine Wilkinson and Shirley Jones. A review appears elsewhere in this issue.

Pictures by J. V. Spinner

Right: The last scene of the play. Sir Pierce of Exton (Howard Goorney, *centre*) brings the body of Richard to Bolingbroke. (*Left*) Barry Clayton as the Bishop of Carlisle.

Above: The opening scene, with John Neville (*centre*) as Richard and *L to R*: Murray Hayne as Green, Nicholas Amer as Bagot, and Anthony White as Aumerle. *Above right*: Richard with the Queen (Virginia McKenna).

"Richard II"

at the Old Vic

● **Scenes from the fourth production of the 1954-1955 Season at the Old Vic. The play is produced by Michael Benthall, with décor by Leslie Hurry and music composed by Christopher Whelen.**

Right: After his banishment for six years by the King, Bolingbroke (Eric Porter) takes leave of his father, John of Gaunt (Meredith Edwards). *Below*: On his return from Ireland Richard hears news of Bolingbroke's victories and refuses to be comforted by the Bishop of Carlisle (Robert Hardy).

Below: *Richard*: For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground And tell sad stories of the death of Kings . . . .

Richard: We are amazed; and thus long have we stood, To watch the fearful bending of thy knee . . . .

Richard appears on the walls of Flint Castle to face Bolingbroke and his forces. Included in the picture are Michael Bates as the Duke of York and *right*, Laurence Hardy as the Earl of Northumberland.

Queen: Gardener, for telling me these news of woe,
Pray God the plants thou graft'st may never grow.

The Queen overhears the gardeners discussing Richard's overthrow by Bolingbroke. *L to R*: Job Stewart and Aubrey Morris as the gardeners and Jane Jacobs, Anne Robson and Loretta Davett as the ladies attending the Queen.

Pictures by Houston-Rogers

Right: *Richard*: On this side my hand, and on that side thine.

The deposition scene in Westminster Hall. Richard yields up his crown to Bolingbroke. (*Right*, Ronald Fraser as Ross).

From Willesden Green to Waterloo Road

by Eric Johns

SEVEN years ago John Neville was an amateur; last month his striking performance as Richard II provided the Old Vic with its most exciting first night since the war. The audience cheered like a football crowd as this young actor stepped forward to take his call. It was gratifying to observe that the house was not swarming with hysterical film fans; Mr. Neville has been far too busy learning his job as an actor to star in films. In consequence he has won his success solely upon his ability to assume a Shakespearean character with conviction and to speak verse with due consideration for the nuance of the lines.

It is hardly correct to say that young Neville was stage-struck as a boy. When he left school at the age of 16½ he was caught up by the glamour of the theatre and thought it would be rather wonderful to be an actor, but as he was the son of working-class parents living in Willesden, he dismissed the idea because the family purse was too slender to cover the cost of academy fees.

Quite philosophically, he decided upon some sort of business career, but before being called up for the Navy he filled in the intermediate time by working in the stores department of a Ford dealer. By way of a hobby, he "bossed the drama section of a youth club," so effectively that when the Willesden Council started a drama festival, his group entered and won the trophy.

They played the first act of *Hamlet*, with young Neville as the Prince of Denmark. It was all very exciting to carry off the prize, but there were further surprises in store. The local education committee were so impressed by the boy's performance that they felt something ought to be done to give him a start as an actor. Wheels were set in motion and it was agreed that the local council should pay his training fees at

John Neville

(Portrait by David Sim)

the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and the county council should provide a grant during the same period. So, on the eve of joining the Navy, the boy knew that he could come back to London and devote all his time and energy to becoming a professional player.

The Navy took him round the world, but offered him no opportunity to enrich his experience of the theatre, beyond seeing Ron Randell and Agnes Doyle in *The Voice of the Turtle* in Sydney. In Hong Kong he thought he might get a glimpse of the mysterious Chinese drama, but the theatres were closed. By way of compensation he went to a cinema to see a revival of *Romeo and Juliet*, with Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard in the title rôles.

On his return he spent an intensive eighteen months at the R.A.D.A. and made his professional debut at the Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park, playing the First Lord in *As You Like It* and understudying Orlando. This month he plays Orlando in his own right at the Old Vic, much to the delight of Robert Atkins who was not slow to detect a star in embryo when he took him on at Regent's Park. During that season the boy also appeared as Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Chatillon in *King John*. The weather was appalling and he was lucky to escape pneumonia.

(Continued overleaf)

From Willesden Green to Waterloo Road *(Contd.)*

After a brief trip to Norway, playing Galsworthy's *Justice* in Oslo, he plunged into nine months of weekly repertory at Lowestoft and sixteen months at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre where he admits he was "not very startling."

Then came three thrilling years with the Old Vic Company at Bristol, where he began to find his feet in a variety of leading parts, including the twins in *Ring Round the Moon*, the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, Young Marlow in *She Stoops to Conquer*, Face in *The Alchemist*, Don Ferdinand in *The Duenna* and Gregers Werle in *The Wild Duck*. The crowning achievement at Bristol was his Henry V, which was seen for a brief season at the Old Vic in London and, practically overnight, led to an invitation to play leading parts in Waterloo Road.

Unlike the majority of actors, Mr. Neville never reads Press criticisms of his performances, for the simple reason that he considers the conflicting opinions of the various critics would only lead to confusion in his own mind and perhaps tempt him to make adjustments to a performance that would be better left alone. He has, however, heard it said that his Richard II is a carbon copy of John Gielgud's; this could hardly be so because Mr. Neville, who, in any case, was a mere boy of twelve when Gielgud last played the part at the Queen's, never saw his predecessor in the part. He saw Robert Harris play it at Stratford and he himself carried a spear in the Alec Guinness Old Vic production at the New, but that completes his experience of the play in performance. He insists, incidentally, that *Richard II*, to succeed in the theatre, should be acted and not treated as a long poem to be sung by the players.

He limits his study of Shakespearean parts to the text. He has a good knowledge of the lines and their meaning by the time he attends the first rehearsal, but considers it a mistake for an actor to read what literary authorities say about the play, simply because they are professors and not players. Similarly he avoids reading what great actors say in their memoirs about their own performances or those of the giants of their day, because it could be disastrous for any modern actor to model his interpretation upon the highly individualistic creations of Kean or Garrick, whose unique personalities must have had considerable bearing upon the manner in which they played Shakespeare.

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William: Will neither of you give me the pleasure of guessing I have something up my sleeve, and asking what I mean by it? *Sarah B.*: Your thoughts have always proved such a bitter disappointment to us both. *William*: Not this time. I am on firm ground. I can afford to be enigmatic. I will wait.

Jean Kent as Sarah Bellaire, Wilfrid Hyde White as William Ashby and Flora Robson as Sarah Ashby, in a moment from Act I.

"A Kind of Folly"

at the Duchess

PRESENTED by Henry Sherek, this play is the first by Owen Holder, the young actor, to be produced in the West End proper and marks the occasion of Flora Robson's first appearance in a comedy rôle for seven years. It will be remembered that Miss Robson and Mr. Holder were seen together in "Black Chiffon," and are now again playing mother and son in "A Kind of Folly," a light-hearted Edwardian three-act comedy set in the year 1910. The play is produced by Denis Carey with décor by Hutchinson Scott.

Incidentally two other plays by Mr. Holder have been seen in London. "The Art of Living" was produced at the Irving Theatre and was favourably received. The other, "Facts of the Heart," was given a Sunday night performance by the Under Thirty Group.

Pictures by Houston-Rogers

Above left: Sarah B: You a'' looking quite lovely. *Sarah A:* We must both be very happy. *Sarah B:* We are. Dear, dear Sarah! *Sarah A:* Dear Sarah!

Wife and mistress meet in William Ashby's sitting-room. It is 1910.

Above: William: I have a feeling I should not say this, my dear, but it gives me great pleasure to see you in my house again.

William, who has a soft spot for women called Sarah, greets his wife affectionately, though as yet unaware of the reasons for her visit, which are to protest about the over-generous allowance he is giving their son, Eustace, and, in the event of his not complying, to ask him for a divorce.

Left: Sarah B: A wife's place is at your side, mine is on your knee. *William:* My little kitten!

Sarah, the wife, onlooker at these pleasantries, is not jealous, merely angry at such bad manners.

William: Ladies, ladies. *Voice*: I say, this is fun.

The veneer of friendliness cracks when wife calls mistress "hussy," and it is at this interesting moment that Eustace arrives through the window. (*Left*, Owen Holder as Eustace).

Below: *William*: Probably an African. *Eustace*: Not handsome enough. English to the core. Ought to be looking after the Khyber Pass. Now he is at the bottom of the steps. Let's ask him in.

Father and son contemplate the man William thinks is the reason for his wife wanting a divorce.

Below: *Sarah A*: Well, there is nothing for it but to start asking awkward questions. For instance, what is Sarah, the other Sarah, to you?

The plot thickens when the stranger, Henry Forbes (Jack Gwillim), though not unknown to Sarah A, turns out to be in search of Sarah B. Henry is at the Foreign Office, after years abroad in the Colonial Service.

Henry: Young man, I am not your old man. But if, by any chance, I ever am, you had better watch out.

Eustace, for his own ends, tries to get to the bottom of the pompous Henry's designs in regard to Sarahs A and B.

Sarah B: I have promised nothing, mind. But I will think about it.

Henry's plan of campaign is somewhat upset when he learns that Sarah B is not William's wife.

Below: *Henry*: . . . . . If you were a Christian gentleman, and this an English court of law, my task would be simple, and you would be hanged. As it is, I must appeal to your better nature. Consider fair play. Deal justice where you have dealt blows. Atone. Retract. Replenish. For if you do not, I will see to it that such vengeance, such unimaginable horrors, such humiliation are wreaked upon you that you will cry out on your knees for mercy . . . .

Encouraged by Sarah A, the normally tongue-tied Henry lets forth a tirade against William.

Above: *Henry*: Wilkinson. Oh. And where do you come from? *Girl*: One-seven-four Castle Avenue, Bedminster, Bristol.

The unexpected arrival of a strange young lady strikes terror in Henry's heart. Earlier he had told Sarah A about an unhappy secret of his past, an unfortunate paternity case, of which episode he claimed to be entirely innocent.

Sarah A: Whatever made you in the first place. *Nan*: I wanted to. I love dressing up and being someone else. I do it at the least opportunity. I should like to be an actress, but my father would never allow it.

Eustace's girl friend, Nan (Sylvia Syms), confesses that Eustace had overheard Henry telling Sarah A about the Bristol episode and couldn't resist the temptation of a spot of impersonation.

Eustace: Good God, you've got different clothes on. *Nan*: Yes; Henry bought them for me, every stitch, after we'd had lunch. He said he owed them to me. I can't think why.

Nan has clearly had some influence on Henry and, even more surprising, has had a long walk around the park with William. She claims to have made up both men's minds for them.

Nan: Goodbye, Mrs. Ashby . . . . Goodbye, Sarah . . . . Goodbye, William . . . . Goodbye, Henry . . . . Goodbye, Eustace. *Eustace*: Nan. *Nan*: Goodbye, Eustace.

To the astonishment of the Sarahs, William and Henry return arm-in-arm, smiling happily. This is the signal for Nan to take her departure—a sad blow for Eustace. For this young lady has decided that they must forget each other. Having met Henry, only such a man will do for her. And she goes off determined to find such a one, twenty years younger.

Henry: For the first time in my life, I know what I want. More than that; I know why I want it. I feel the same as the day I first put on long trousers. *William*: And I. Both of us have chosen wisely and well. Let us congratulate ourselves.

Thanks to Nan, the two men have solved their problems and are entertaining the warmest feelings for each other. But bitter disillusionment follows when they discover that they both want the same woman, Sarah A.

Sarah A: The point is, neither of you wants to marry me.

Sarah is astonished at the turn of events, particularly as both men are bent on tossing a coin to decide who shall be the first to have fifteen minutes alone with Sarah in which to convince her. But Sarah A has no intention of being trapped again, and skilfully conveys to each man that she is not the woman for him.

Below: *Sarah B*: What is going on? I dreamt I was being left out of everything.
Henry: Sarah! Sarah. Sarah. Sarah. I want— Sarah— I want you to—

Baulked of Sarah A, Henry is determined to propose to Sarah B, but at the last minute the words will not come, thus proving Sarah A right in her contention that Henry is a born bachelor. How Sarah A solves her own personal problem it would be unfair to divulge, but she it is who really has the last word!

1 *Robert*: To raise the siege of Orleans! *Joan*: Yes, squire; that is what God is sending me to do. Three men will be enough for you to send with me if they are good men and gentle to me. They have promised to come with me. Polly and Jack and—

The opening scene in the Castle of Vaucouleurs. *Left*: Kevin Stoney as Robert De Baudricourt and Siobhan McKenna as Joan.

2 *Joan*: Gentle little Dauphin, I am sent to you to crown you king in the cathedral of Rheims.

Kenneth Williams as the Dauphin (*centre*) and Archbishop of Rheims, Seymour Green as Gil and Rowena Ingram as the Duchesse de la T

"Saint Joan"

● **SCENES from the revival of Bernard Shaw's play which is presented by Henry Sherek and is the production by John Fernald, with settings by Paul Mayo and costumes by Michael Ellis, which**

4 *Warwick*: Our friend here takes the view that the young woman is a sorceress. It would, I presume, be the duty of your reverent Lordship to denounce her to the Inquisition and have her burnt for that offence.

L to R: David March as Chaplain de Stogumber, Douglas Wilmer as the Earl of Warwick, and Oliver Burt as Peter Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais.

(*Right*): The scene in the cathedral after the Coronation. (The part of Dunois, *left centre*, is now played by Robert Cartland).

Joan: I have better friends a

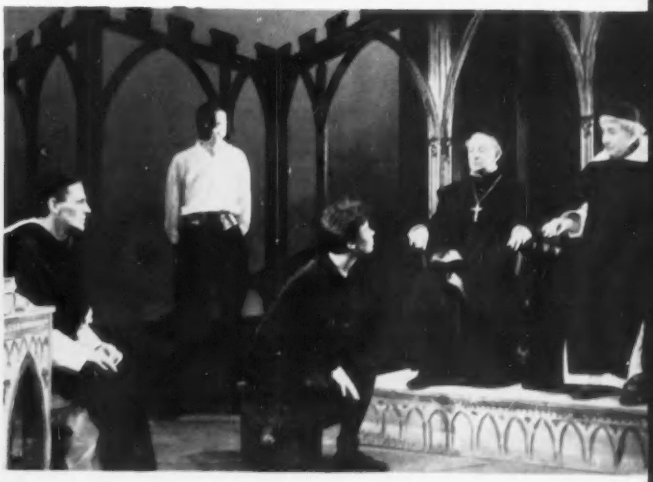
re the English away from Orleans and France, and to here all true kings of France are crowned.
ight of picture (*L. to R.*) Frank Royde as the de Rais, Barbara Lynne as Lady-in-Waiting, nouille. The scene is the palace at Chinon.

3 *Joan*: Charles: I come from the land, and have gotten my strength working on the land; and I tell thee that the land is thine to rule righteously and keep God's peace in, and not to pledge at the pawn shop as a drunken woman pledges her children's clothes. And I come from God to tell thee to kneel in the cathedral and solemnly give thy kingdom to Him for ever and ever, and become the greatest king in the world as His steward and His bailiff, His soldier and His servant. The very clay of France will become holy; her soldiers will be the soldiers of God . . . . Wilt be a poor little Judas, and betray me and Him that sent me?

at the St. Martin's

was first seen at the Arts Theatre. Siobhan McKenna's performance in the title rôle, which called forth the highest praise last year at the Arts, is again acclaimed on all sides as a superb intepretation.

d better counsel than yours.



6 *The Inquisitor*: Joan: the Church instructs you that these apparitions are demons seeking your soul's perdition. Do you accept the instruction of the Church? *Joan*: I accept the messenger of God. How could any faithful believer of the Church refuse him?

The Trial. (*Left*, Desmond Jordan as Brother Martin Ladvenu and, *right*, Charles Lloyd Pack as the Inquisitor).

7 *Joan*: Give me that writing. Light your fire: do you think I dread it as much as the life of a rat in a hole? My voices were right. *Brother Martin*: Joan! Joan! *Joan*: Yes: they told me you were fools, and that I was not to listen to your fine words nor trust to your charity. You promised me my life; but you lied. You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead . . . .

Joan, worn down by the sophistries of the Inquisitor, recants, only to discover that the threat of burning is transmuted to life imprisonment with solitary confinement.

(Pictures by Houston-Rogers)

8 *Joan*: Thou looks older, lad. *Charles*: I am older. Am I really asleep? *Joan*: Fallen asleep over thy silly book. *Charles*: That's funny. *Joan*: Not so funny as that I am dead, is it?

The Epilogue, twenty-five years later.

9 *Joan*: Oh God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, oh Lord, how long?

The closing moment of the play.

Whispers from the Wings by Looker-on

SIOBHAN McKENNA has conquered London as completely as Joan of Arc conquered Orleans. Her Irish peasant conception of Shaw's Saint Joan at the St. Martin's is the most sensational triumph enjoyed by any Irish actress since Sara Allgood first played Juno in London. Her performance of haunting beauty, quite unlike Sybil Thorndike's stimulating creation, simply goes to show that Shaw has written a part as great as Hamlet, capable of a succession of highly individual interpretations by our greatest actresses.

As a child, Miss McKenna used to play the villain in little plays written by a group of youngsters who acted in a barn for fun, using their parents' clothes for costumes. But there was never any question of her going on the stage; she was all for being a writer and while at the National University of Ireland in Galway, she thought she might become a journalist, believing it would be an easy way of learning the craft of writing.

The An Tainhdheare Theatre in Galway is unique; it is the only Gaelic theatre in the world. About the size of the Arts Theatre in London, it was opened in 1928 by Micheál MacLiammóir and Hilton Edwards with *Diarmuid and Grainne*, MacLiammóir's Gaelic version of a medieval legend. Since that time only plays in Gaelic have been presented on the boards of this Galway theatre, and the tradition has been so jealously guarded that English-speaking actors are not even allowed to rent the theatre. With the aid of a small State grant, it is run on a semi-professional basis, with the help of acting talent recruited from the local University.

In this way Siobhan McKenna made her debut, while still a 17-year-old student, in, above all things, that famous Aldwych farce, *Tons of Money*. Other comedy parts followed, until Walter Machen persuaded her to translate Barrie's *Mary Rose* into Gaelic and play the title-rôle. This demonstrated the versatility of the young actress, who was then tempted to appear in Gaelic versions of a succession of plays by Shakespeare, Shaw, O'Casey, O'Neill and Molière. Lady Macbeth and Saint Joan were two of her outstanding performances.

By this time she began to feel she might make a success of an acting career, so she joined the famous Abbey Theatre in Dublin,

Siobhan McKenna as she appears in the opening scene of "Saint Joan."

when F. J. McCormick and Denis O'Dea, who later became her husband, were two of the most popular leading men. Hollywood talent-spotters were in Dublin at the time, offering tempting long-term contracts to promising youngsters. Miss McKenna toyed with the idea of accepting one, but when F. J. McCormick said, "If you want to be a real actress, stay here with us and forget about films," she took his advice and remained at the Abbey for three years.

Her London appearances, in *The White Steed*, *Fading Mansion* and *Heloise* were of brief duration; then Hilton Edwards staged *Saint Joan* for her in English in Dublin last year. John Fernald saw her; implored her to play it for him at the Arts Theatre in London; and now Henry Sherek is presenting her at the St. Martin's, with more or less the original cast from the Arts.

Wise playgoers should hasten to see this impressive performance while there is still time, because Miss McKenna does not really enjoy long runs. She would prefer a season of about four plays performed in nightly

(Continued on page 40)

'The World of Sholom Aleichem'

at the Embassy

● PRESENTED by Oscar Lewenstein Ltd. with Sam Wanamaker, in association with Marjory Hawtrey, this is the Howard da Silva—Arnold Perl production of "The World of Sholom Aleichem" as dramatised by Arnold Perl. This unusual entertainment consists of three plays, all of which are directed by Sam Wanamaker. The music is composed by Serge Hovey and Robert Cormier, with costumes by Bernard Sarron and dances arranged by Tutte Lemkow.

Left: David Kossoff as Mendele, the bookseller, who introduces each item.

Right:

"A Tale of Chelm"

Adapted from Sholom Aleichem's "The Enchanted Tailor," this is the story of the Melamed (Alfie Bass, *right*) and his adventures with a goat. *Left*, Rifkele his wife (Minerva Pious), and, *centre*, Rabbi David (Lou Jacobi).

Below:

"Bontche Schweig"
(From I. L. Peretz)

Alfie Bass as Bontche Schweig (*centre*), Lou Jacobi as Father Abraham (*left*) and Mark Dignam as the Presiding Angel (*right*) in a moment from the sentimental little play about a sorely-afflicted spirit who finds he may have anything he wants in Heaven.

"The High School"

Taken from Sholom Aleichem's "Gymnasium," this is the longest of the three plays, occupying the second half of the programme. It tells of the efforts of Aaron Katz and Hannah, his wife, to get their son, Moishe, into a High School where there is a quota operating adversely against Jewish entrants. Moishe (Jeremy Spenser, *right*) fails his exam on the first occasion and his mother employs a tutor (Lou Jacobi, *centre*) to ensure his success next time. *Left*, Meier Tzelniker as Aaron and Miriam Karlin as Hannah.

Aaron and Hannah with two other parents (Minerva Pious and Alfie Bass, *left*) scan the list of the scholarship results and are delighted to see their son's name included near the top. Aaron, goaded on by his ambitious wife, now sets about ensuring that his son gets his place, by a little polite bribery of the Principal of the school.

A happy family party is organised to celebrate Moishe's success. (Included *L. to R.* are, John Barrard as Uncle Maxl, Kitty Davies as Aunt Reba, Gerald Blake as "Cousin Fanny's latest" and Joan Drummond as Cousin Fanny). But next day Moishe is turned away from the school because his name is not after all on the register, and the rest of the play concerns Aaron's and Hannah's efforts to get their son into a High School, during the course of which they have to sell up everything, though finally successful.

Britain's New Operas *by Penelope Turing*

Review of a Season remarkable in Opera History

THIS last season will be long remembered as an outstanding one in the history of English opera. In five months we have had the London premières of five new operas; a remarkable record in any country and a phenomenal one for a nation where opera is not usually regarded as a native art. What is more, several of the new works merit inclusion in the international repertory.

The honours of these experiments are well divided. Of the five, two—Sir William Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* and Michael Tippett's *Midsummer Marriage* have been given their world premières by Covent Garden, one—Lennox Berkeley's *Nelson* by Sadler's Wells, and the remaining two—Britten's *Turn of the Screw* and Berkeley's *A Dinner Engagement* were brought to London by the English Opera Group after being first seen at Venice and Aldeburgh respectively.

The first and, it must be admitted, least successful was *Nelson*. Lennox Berkeley and his librettist Alan Pryce-Jones fell into the old trap of the historical plot. Dramatic characters and events in history ought to provide ideal matter for stage drama, but nine times out of ten they prove a delusion. The number of characters and the time factor are usually unwieldy and nowadays we are too nice-minded to take liberties with history, so as often as not the result is creative indigestion.

These difficulties were everywhere apparent in *Nelson*. The music, like the proverbial curate's egg, was good in parts and would, I think, have had a much happier reception if Mr. Berkeley had been better served by his singers. Robert Thomas looked a good Nelson and sang reasonably well, but failed to turn the part into a character. Victoria Elliott neither looked nor sounded anything like the usual conception of Emma Hamilton, and was distressingly inclined to simper; David Ward and Arnold Matters added some strength to the company as Hardy and Sir William Hamilton, but only Anna Pollak with her beautifully sung and acted Lady Nelson brought tears to the eyes and distinction to the production. Vilem Tausky was the conductor.

But where *Nelson* failed *A Dinner Engagement* succeeded brilliantly. Music and libretto (by Paul Dehn) of this delicious one-act opera sparkle with the effervescence of champagne. It is witty and charming, and the story—the premature arrival of the Grand Duchess of Monteblanco and her son in the Earl of Dunmow's Chelsea kitchen when he and his family are preparing the dinner—is perfectly fitted to its length and treatment. The cast which was headed by April Cantelo as the Dunmows' daughter, Alexander Young as the Prince and Frederick Sharp and Emelie Hooke as the Earl and Countess all achieved the necessary

"Nelson"

A moment from Act III, Scene II—the death of Nelson, from Lennox Berkeley's opera, which had its World Premiere at Sadler's Wells on 22nd September 1954. The libretto is by Alan Pryce-Jones, with scenery by Felix Kelly and costumes by Motley. George Devine produced. In this scene, which takes place in the cockpit of the Victory, Robert Thomas appears as the dying Nelson and David Ward as Hardy.

Picture by Denis de Marney

L. to R. **John Ford, Catherine Lawson, Frederick Sharp, Flora Nielsen, Alexander Young, April Cantelo and Emelie Hooke in an amusing scene from Lennox Berkeley's successful one-act opera presented at Sadler's Wells by the English Opera Group.** *(Picture by Denis de Marney)*

"A Dinner Engagement"

style and polish to give point to the humour, and their diction was exceptionally good. The conductor on this much happier occasion was again Vilem Tausky.

Benjamin Britten, after falling at the historical fence with *Gloriana*, has gathered fresh and well-deserved laurels with *The Turn of the Screw*. Nothing can make Henry James' story anything but grim and unpleasant, but its haunted atmosphere has fired Mr. Britten's imagination, and the result is a *tour de force*. Personally I think it would have been better without the Prologue, and there are far too many scenes, eight in each of the two acts (*The Innocents*, William Archibald's play on the same story, was better constructed in this respect, though the opera conveys the mounting horror far more poignantly), but these are minor points. I have never heard Jennifer Vyvyan sing better, or seen her act half as well as she did in the part of the governess. Peter Pears as the evil genius Quint sang and acted, as always, with style and intelligence, though he was hampered by a carroty pantomime wig and still showed a regrettable tendency to bend at the knees. The boy David Hemmings sang the difficult rôle of Miles very well indeed, though he looked

(Continued overleaf)

"The Turn of the Screw"

Benjamin Britten's gripping opera, based on Henry James, had its World Premiere at Venice last year and was later presented at Sadler's Wells by the English Opera Group. *Below left:* **Olive Dyer and David Hemmings as Flora and Miles, Joan Cross as Mrs. Grose and Jennifer Vyvyan as the Governess, and,** *below right,* **the Governess sees the ghost of Peter Quint (Peter Pears).**

Denis de Marney

rather too normal for this ghost-ridden child. John Piper provided just the right sense of brooding evil with his sets, and Britten conducted his own score with inspiration. *The Turn of the Screw* will certainly take its macabre place among the world's operas.

Troilus and Cressida is a heroic work on the grand scale, and Sir William Walton and Christopher Hassall have been wise enough not to follow the accepted story slavishly. They have skipped Shakespeare's version and gone back to Boccaccio and Chaucer, adding their own variation of Cressida's character; and in so doing they have in fact followed

"Troilus and Cressida"

Magda Laszlo and Richard Lewis in the title rôles of Sir William Walton's brilliant new opera, a full pictorial feature on which appeared in our last issue.
(Picture by Wilfrid Newton)

Shakespeare's method with many of the sources of his plots.

The opera is powerful and richly conceived, the music neither obviously lyrical nor excessively "modern." It has been said that *Troilus* was written out of due season, that its style is thirty years too late. Such classification is full of pitfalls, for musical works are not turned out in strict vintages but according to the character of the composer whose art may mature to a particular flavour earlier or later than his contemporaries. This is Walton '54; if it had been Walton '24 it would have been something quite different. Sir Malcolm Sargent brought vigour and understanding to the conducting. Richard Lewis made a fine and well-sung figure of Troilus, and Peter Pears gave an almost perfect rendering of the comedy relief Pandarus, but it is not very clear why Magda Laszlo was chosen as Cressida. The character is too querulous to be a really sympathetic heroine even in this white-washed version, but that is no excuse for Miss Laszlo's edginess of voice. She looked lovely, but there are half a dozen English singers who would have sounded better. Something, too, should be done about the singers' diction. Here was an English opera, sung almost entirely by British singers, and yet with the exception of Peter Pears only about one word in a hundred was intelligible.

No one could possibly accuse Michael Tippett's *Midsummer Marriage* of being old-fashioned; taken as a whole the work is very new wine indeed, and no doubt some of the incongruities of the production will disappear with keeping. The main story is simple enough. Jenifer, whose aspirations are of the spirit, and Mark whose love is principally physical, meet on a hill top for their marriage on midsummer morning, only to realise the gulf that lies between them. Eventually, however, they find mutual happiness after exploring the new worlds of each other's experience—and through the opposition of Jenifer's father, King Fisher, a pillar of Big Business; while Fisher's secretary Bella and the mechanic Jack provide a gay little domestic romance as a sub-plot. So much is straightforward, but it is hedged about so thickly with Ancients, male and female chorus and ritual dances that it becomes difficult to follow the simplest theme.

The music is lyrical and extremely singable; John Pritchard got the most out of the very pleasing score, and the singing was very good indeed, especially by Richard Lewis and Joan Sutherland as Mark and Jenifer, and Adele Leigh and John Lanigan as Bella and Jack. John Cranko's choreography is less happy, and Barbara Hepworth's set symbolises symbolism, which is perhaps all that is required of it.

(See opposite page)

In our next issue will be included an article, number 13 in the series "Creative Artists in the Theatre," by Elisabethe H. C. Corathiel, on Barbara Hepworth's interesting décor for Michael Tippett's "Midsummer Marriage," which is reviewed above and scenes from which appear on the following page.

"The Midsummer Marriage"

Scenes from Michael Tippett's new opera which had its first performance at Covent Garden on 27th January. *Top* Otakar Kraus as King Fisher in Act I. *Centre* The third of the Ritual Dances in Act II showing, centre, Pirmin Trecu as the Bird and, right, Julia Farron as the Hawk. The choreography for the dances, which occupy a large part of Act II, is by John Cranko. *Right* Adele Leigh and John Lanigan as Bella and Jack.

(Pictures by Houston-Rogers)

Echoes from Broadway

Shirl Conway and Richard Derr (*centre*) in the new musical "Plain and Fancy." The book is by Joseph Stein and Will Glickman, lyrics by Arnold B. Horwitt, music by Albert Hague, choreography by Helen Tamiris. The show is directed by Morton Da Costa.

New York Plays reviewed by our American Correspondent Mawby Green

MELODRAMAS are in vogue this season: *Witness for the Prosecution, The Bad Seed, Anastasia, The Saint of Bleecker Street,* but the best of the batch is the latest entertainment, Joseph Hayes' *The Desperate Hours.* Even Mr. Hayes would probably admit his basic situation is terribly "old hat," but he has so distinctly, honestly and convincingly worked it that his play seems absolutely fresh—so fresh that he has also performed the difficult "hat trick." *The Desperate Hours* was first a successful novel, then a motion picture starring Humphrey Bogart and Frederic March, though not yet in release, and now a smash Broadway hit.

How often have you seen or read the story of the escaped convicts who take over an innocent household, terrorising the family, until captured or killed by the police? Well, that's Mr. Hayes' plot. The difference is that he has made all his characters—convicts, victims, police—very believable as human beings, and it is their inner and outer conflicts that drive the play to its smashing climax as much as the innumerable twists and devices created by the author's ingenuity. But these devices, it must be emphasised, never seem "dragged in" to keep the plot spinning; they stem honestly from the situations these particular characters find themselves involved in.

This type of play generally finds the American actor most at home and Karl Malden, Nancy Coleman and Paul Newman, as heads of the family and convicts, respectively, keep up the tradition. The taut direction is by Robert Montgomery, who had been devoting himself exclusively to television these past several years, and the suspense he helps generate is so potent that there hasn't been so many loud, terrified audience gasps since Leo G. Carroll, as the Inspector, almost left his hat behind for the villainous Mr. Manningham to spot in *Angel Street.*

The latest musical success, *Plain and Fancy,* is equally familiar, but the authors, Joseph Stein and Will Glickman, along with the lyricist, Arnold B. Horwitt, and the other collaborators, have not made it distinctly their own. They have borrowed bits and ideas from *Oklahoma!, Brigadoon, The Teahouse of the August Moon, Carousel,* among countless others, skilfully but with no particular creative imagination. The result is a pleasant, though unexciting, musical which happens to look better than

it is when compared with some current song-and-dance sensations.

The "plain" part of the title refers to the Amish people, farm-folk in Pennsylvania who haven't changed a habit in two hundred years. They are industrious, God-fearing men and women, with no use for modern conveniences. Not only don't they use zippers, they haven't even got around to buttons yet. The "fancy" part is handled by a pair of Broadway sophisticates, one of whom is out to sell his inherited farm in the Amish district. The humour, naturally, comes from contrasting these two worlds, both of which are treated with respect.

Literate, quaint, amusing and often tender and touching, *Plain and Fancy* owes much to its extremely well-chosen and capable cast. American-born Shirl Conway, though better known for her work in England, is a standout both as comedian and singer as the Broadway blonde, strongly impressing that she is just about ready to carry a whole show on her own. Sharing the honours is a most appealing lass with a delightful sense of humour, Barbara Cook, whose light soprano singing of "This Is All Very New to Me," makes falling in love for the first time as entrancing as we would all like to remember it.

Moving north to Vermont, another regional play is John Cecil Holm's *The Southwest Corner*, in which Eva LeGallienne plays an 83-year-old woman, who takes in a city woman as her companion for her declining years. This situation had everyone expecting another melodrama, in which the old girl would be "done in," but Mr. Holm refused to make his companion downright villainous, achieving almost the same ends by setting her up as an outrageously insensitive, boorish and garrulous creature. The play, however, has a tendency to ramble on like a rubbery one-actor undergoing the stretching process.

The Phoenix Theatre presented a revival of Bernard Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma*, which was deemed little more than adequate, but even an average production of Shaw, as usual, proved more stimulating than any other show on Broadway. Geraldine Fitzgerald made an appealing Jennifer Dubedat, although lacking in personal sparkle, and Roddy McDowall as the artist, Louis Dubedat, showed once again that this former child movie star is the most accomplished young light comedian on the American stage today.

Other revivals have come from the New York City Center Theatre Company with William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life* proving just as effective a play as it did in 1939, though the production in many aspects fell short of the original. Helen Hayes was seen and applauded in Barrie's *What Every Woman knows* and Joshua Logan's *The Wisteria Trees*, that abortive attempt to transfer Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* to America's Deep South. Jan de Hartog's two-character play, *The Fourposter*, surprised everyone by being every bit as effective in this huge theatre, with Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn, who created the parts here, being acclaimed for finding new riches to add to their already illustrious performances.

The enterprising off-Broadway group known as Proscenium Productions, which gave us an admirable revival of *The Way of the World*, distinguished itself again with its production of *Thieves' Carnival*, earning for its author, Jean Anouilh, the first favourable notices he has received in New York. *Carnival* is a gossamer light and witty charade, fortunately lacking the author's usual cynical attitude towards love and its transitoriness, which so set American audiences and critics against his previously produced comedies.

L-R: **Paul Newman, Nancy Coleman and Karl Malden in "The Desperate Hours."**

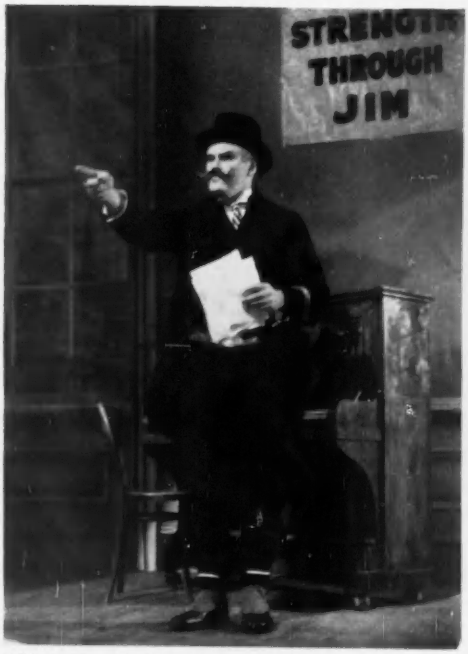
"The Talk of the Town"

● SCENES from the successful twice-nightly revue which opened at the Adelphi last November. Presented by George and Alfred Black and Jack Hylton, "The Talk of the Town," which is produced by George Black and directed by Alec Shanks and Joan Davis, with comedy sequences by Frank Muir and Denis Norden, reaches a new high standard for this popular type of entertainment.

"Send the Relief!" Jimmy Edwards, *right*, as the lighthouse keeper with Tony Hancock as his mate in a comedy high spot of the show. This extremely funny sketch about a lighthouse keeper marooned in heavy weather is from an idea by Michael Bentine.

Pictures by Houston-Rogers

"Who's Who." Tony Hancock and Jimmy Edwards in another amusing item. Jimmy Edwards is, of course, already well known to Adelphi audiences, while Tony Hancock, a comparative newcomer, has quickly proved himself a top line comedian.

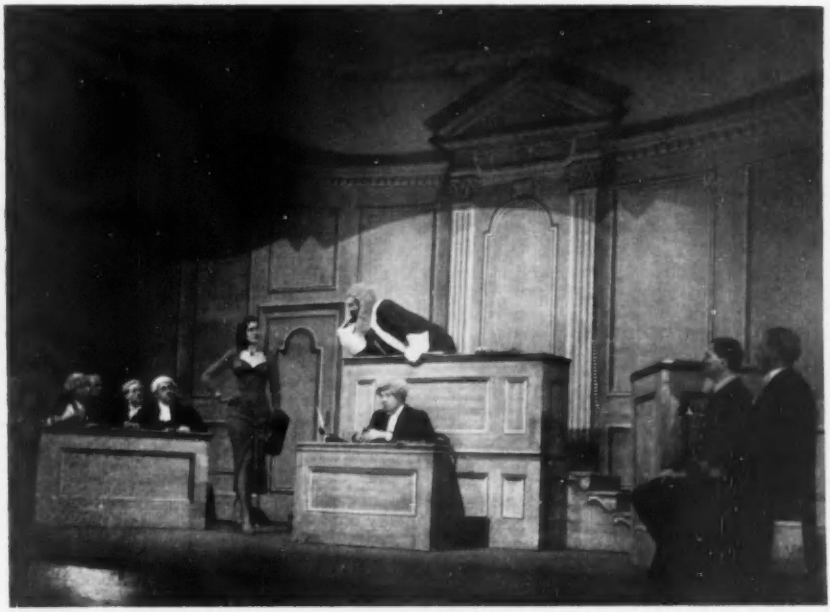


"**Vote for Jim!**" Jimmy Edwards introduces his audience to Jimmunism.

"**Mr. Rhythm.**" Tony Hancock's popular impressions of the species crooner.

Below; "**The Gay Nineties.**" *Centre*, Billy McCormack with members of the company in an attractive number from the show.

"**Paris by Night.**" Two scenes from the most spectacular item in *The Talk of the Town*. *Above*: Lucienne and Astor in their sensational apache dance, and *below*, Kathryn Moore sings to the habitués and tourists in La Rose Rouge night club.



"**Judge for Yourself,**" in which Jimmy Edwards is at his funniest as the skittish Mr. Justice Edwards.

Below: "**The Feline of the Species,**" showing the John Tiller Girls as the Kute Kittens.

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The twenty-fifth annual general meeting of The Decca Record Company Limited was held on 8th February in London.

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To finance various capital commitments made necessary through the increase in the Company's scale of operations and to provide additional working capital, we are making an issue to Ordinary Shareholders of one share for every four held at 15s. per share. We also offered the unissued balance of £250,000 4½ per cent. Notes to Noteholders and Shareholders at 98½ per cent. It is also proposed to capitalise £350,201 4s. of the Share Premium Account resulting from the new issue of Ordinary Shares and distribute one "A" Ordinary Share free in respect of each two existing Ordinary Shares.

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B.E.A. Viscounts continue to get good service from the Decca Navigator, the flight log in many cases proving invaluable. Many experienced pilots have expressed the opinion that Decca can make a bigger contribution to the safety and reliability of air travel than any other known navigational aid.

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We have continued to retain our position amongst the leaders in the electronic field.

Turnover for the year to date shows a substantial increase over that of the same period in the previous year. We are assured of another very successful year's trading and look forward to the future with every confidence.

repertory, as is the custom at the Old Vic and Stratford. Given a free hand she would choose *Saint Joan, The Seagull, The Playboy of the Western World* and *Juno and the Paycock*, so that patrons could see her in four different parts in the course of a week. Perhaps her sensational success in the Shaw play will induce Mr. Sherek also to present the three other works and thus keep Miss McKenna happily occupied in the West End.

She particularly wants London to see *The Countess Cathleen*, the Yeats verse play, which she performed in English at the Abbey. She also wants to appear in *Who'll Carry the Bag?*, a comedy about tinkers written specially for her by Barbara Edwards, but not yet seen, even in Eire. Set in her native Belfast, it gives her a chance to play a different part in each of the three acts.

Her two greatest ambitions are to play Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Racine's Phèdre, in English translation; but even so, she insists upon actors making a point of appearing in plays of their own time as often as possible. If they restrict their activities to the classics and other revivals, what will happen to contemporary dramatists?

1955 Edinburgh Festival

THE Ninth Edinburgh International Festival will be held from 21st August to 10th September 1955. Once again the Old Vic Theatre Company is to present a Shakespearean play, but this year they will be seen in the Lyceum Theatre, while a new play by Thornton Wilder will have its world première on the apron stage of the Assembly Hall. Entitled *A Life in the Sun*, it will be presented in association with Tennent Productions, and Tyrone Guthrie will direct a cast headed by Irene Worth. Another notable drama event will be the visit of the famous French actress, Edwige Feuillère in *La Dame aux Camélias* and another play.

The Royal Danish Ballet will make their first appearance at the Festival and other visitors are to be the Azuma Kabuki Dancers from Tokyo. Opera is again to be presented by Glyndebourne Opera Company with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. A new production of Verdi's *Falstaff* is to be presented and *La Forza del Destino* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* are the other two operas in the repertoire. The conductors will be Vittorio Gui and Carlo Maria Giulini and the producers Karl Ebert and Peter Ebert.

STILL RUNNING

● Scenes from London's two long-running American musicals which have now been joined by *Wonderful Town*, at the Princes. *Left*: Valerie Hobson as Anna Leonowens and Herbert Lom as the King of Siam in *The King and I* at Drury Lane, and, *below*, Edmund Hockridge as Judge Aristide Forestier and Irene Hilda as La Mome Pistache in Cole Porter's *Can-Can* at the Coliseum. *The King and I*, a Richard Rodgers - Hammerstein II musical, had its first performance at Drury Lane on 8th October 1953, and *Can-Can* came to the Coliseum a year later, on 14th October 1954.

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As we go to Press

THE next production at the Arts Theatre, commencing on 9th March, is to be *Sacrifice to the Wind*, by André Obey, in an English version by John Whiting, produced by Stephen Murray. This play recently enjoyed a successful broadcast.

Following the withdrawal on 5th March, after twenty-two and a half months run, of *Airs on a Shoestring*, Laurier Lister's next presentation at The Royal Court on 10th March will be *The Burning Boat*, a musical play by Nicholas Phipps and Geoffrey Wright, which is to be directed by Murray MacDonald, with Bruce Trent, Marie Ney and Michael Gough in the cast.

Laurier Lister, in pursuance of his policy of engaging well-known artists to design the scenery for his productions has secured the services of Sir Hugh Casson, whose scenery for *Troilus and Cressida* at Covent Garden, was much admired and whose Coronation decoration scheme for the Mall became the talk of London.

The play, which is set in a Devon town, has as its background a local music festival with its leading character a world-famous violinist, whose effect on the Festival helpers, and one in particular, should make of *The Burning Boat* a dramatic and romantic play with a good measure of comedy.

Basil Dean's recent successful Arts Theatre production of the George and Weedon Grossmith classic, *The Diary of a Nobody*, began a pre-London tour at Oxford on 21st February, with Leslie Henson as Mr. Pooter and Hermione Baddeley as his pleasant wife, Carrie.

This production, which is to be presented by E. P. Clift, will bring Basil Dean and Leslie Henson together again in management after a lapse of some years.

Uncertain Joy, a new play by Charlotte Hastings, whose *Bonaventure* had a long run at the Vaudeville, explores very vividly the troubles, tensions and divided loyalties of a married couple who try to befriend and adopt a tough and rather pathetic little "dead end kid."

Roger Livesey and Ursula Jeans play the leading characters as husband and wife—Roger Livesey being a Schoolmaster, and his wife an Author who is engaged on a new novel.

The relationship between the husband and wife and small boy—played by Michael Brooke, whose first stage play it is—develops with a very acute blend of human comedy and conflict. Warren Jenkins directs.

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THE administrators of **A.P.I.** take pleasure in announcing a **DINNER-DANCE** and **ALL STAR CABARET** to take place on **SUNDAY 27th March 1955** at the **Cafe de Paris** at **8 p.m.** to **1 a.m.**

The price of the tickets are **£4 4s. 0d.** downstairs and **3½ gns.** upstairs, and it is hoped to sell the full 500 tickets, which is the maximum number the Cafe can hold.

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Already such top line artists as TOMMY TRINDER, EVELYN LAYE, BILL KERR and ELIZABETH WELCH have offered their services for the gala cabaret. A special surprise will be the debut in cabaret with TOMMY TRINDER, of one of the straight theatre's best beloved actors, whose age has recently given rise to a good deal of controversy. Yes, it is none other than A. E. MATTHEWS, O.B.E., the President of the Committee of **A.P.I.**, and one of its strongest supporters.

It is hoped that all those belonging to the theatre and outside it who have spent many happy hours within its portals, will rally round and make this evening a memorable success.

ONE of the principal ways in which you can help, is to make sure of your tickets by writing immediately-enclosing a cheque—to the organisers at:

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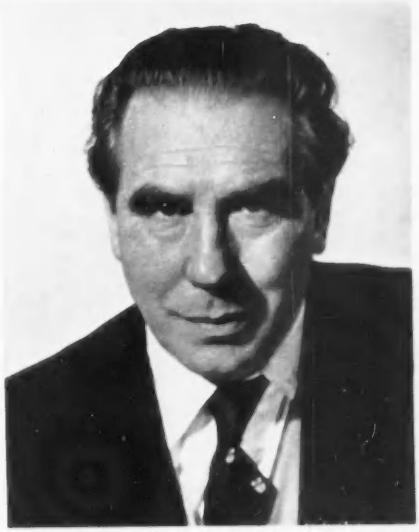
The Wolfit Story

by Basil Francis

DONALD WOLFIT'S autobiography, *First Interval* (*Odhams*, 16/-), is a classic story of militant single-mindedness. There was every reason why he should take up some other profession than the stage and indeed at one time there was talk of the young Donald following his great-uncles into the ministry, but from his earliest days he knew in his heart that it had to be the stage or nothing. There were the usual childish dressings-up and school plays, amateur theatricals and concerts, but the end of the 1914-18 war found him still at school preparing with a heavy heart for an academic career. With the doubtful qualification of Intermediate B.Sc. he took a post as a very youthful usher at a school for the sons of gentlemen at Eastbourne, where he taught indifferent mathematics but excellent Shakespeare for a year. He stuck it for a year and then at the age of eighteen wrote to Charles Doran who was visiting the town with his Shakespeare company, begging for a job, any job, so long as it was in the theatre. Doran sized him up and enrolled him as a student, odd-job boy and supernumerary—and offered experience in lieu of salary.

And what invaluable experience it was! On his very first week on tour he established a record which I doubt will ever be broken. One of the company was taken ill and in a daze the young Wolfit found himself pitchforked on to the stage to play no less than five Shakespearean rôles in four days, entirely unrehearsed. Any actor who could survive such a test could tackle anything. Donald Wolfit had arrived. For four years he toured in Shakespeare, learning his art in the only place where real acting can be learned—in the theatre—but the hard life had undermined his strength and he was forced to rest for several months. As soon as he was fit he wrote to Fred Terry asking for an interview, and from that day his career marched steadily forward until he achieved his ambition and became an actor-manager in the long and honoured tradition of Garrick, Elliston, Terry, Tree. . . .



Donald Wolfit

(Portrait by Bert Cann)

The book is a record of his achievements; there is no coy mock-modesty about it but at the same time it is refreshingly free from any touch of conceitedness and we find the author constantly honouring those who have taught and helped him in his career: William Poel, Rosabel Watson, Jessie Bond, Charles Power, the Terrys. Once and for all he refutes the stupid allegation perennially levelled at actor-managers, that they habitually surround themselves with an indifferent company so that they themselves might seem to shine the brighter. This is true in his case only if one is prepared to concede that Sybil Thorndike, Lewis Casson, Phyllis Neilson-Terry are second-raters, for all of these stars and others of equal magnitude

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have at one time played under his actor-management.

It is not surprising that certain passages in his book are controversial for Donald Wolfit has been involved in quite a few theatrical upheavals in his time and one marvels at the admirable self-restraint which he shows in discussing his differences of opinion with authority. In some circles Wolfit is labelled as being "difficult"—which in plain English means that he has a wholesome dislike of being pushed around by bureaucrats and that he does not suffer fools gladly. During the war the Council for Encouragement of Music and the Arts tried to dictate the running of his company in exchange for a small subsidy. Wolfit quit. Later, when playing with the Old Vic Company and he saw nothing but frustration ahead, he quit. When he went on Broadway . . . but that is another story, which I hope he will tell in Act Two.

Although he seldom lets himself go there are passages in his book which reveal to the thoughtful reader some of the things about which Wolfit feels strongly, even passionately: actors who appear in public still in make-up; dramatic schools where "inexperienced young groups make their own rules"; academics who tend to make Shakespeare a sort of literary pill; Bernard Shaw, who had no genuine love for the theatre except as a means of making money and as a spouting ground for his own views; and of course C.E.M.A. who "encouraged" the living theatre by allowing the historic Lyceum to be turned into a dance hall. In the final chapter Wolfit makes no bones about his views on the National Theatre controversy and by tracing the muddled history of the successive plans demonstrates only too clearly what bureaucratic control can and will do to the theatre in this country. "Thus," he says eloquently, "has the project for a National Theatre lurched from stalemate to stalemate down the decades." He stands for a blazing independence in the theatre, and who can deny that the individual control exercised by the actor-managers over the centuries has not been, with few exceptions, a good and healthy thing?

The publishers of this book have an excellent and obvious reason for ringing down the curtain in the immediate post-war years. Much important theatrical history has been made during the past decade; let us hope that the second Act of the Wolfit Story will not long be delayed.

Notes and Topics

Amateur Stage

THE **Federation of Civil Service Dramatic Societies** is holding its fifth annual One-Act Play Festival in Room D, Civil Service Commission, Burlington Gardens, W1, from 14th-17th June. The Adjudicator will be John Warrington, who, it may be remembered, recently accepted the post of Producer of Drama for the BBC Television Studios. Rules and entry forms may be obtained from the Federation's Publicity Officer, Mrs. Ethel Menzies, Central Statistical Office, Cabinet Office, Great George Street, S.W.1. The closing date for submission of entry forms is 31st March.

Forthcoming productions of **The Theatre Club, Mountview,** are *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, on 14th-19th March, and A. J. Cronin's *Jupiter Laughs*, from 28th March to 2nd April.

The Middlesbrough Little Theatre is presenting Guy Bolton's adaptation of Marcelle Maurette's *Anastasia* from 3rd to 12th March.

As You Like It will be given by the **Bradford Civic Playhouse** from the 2nd to the 12th March.

Future productions at the Halifax Playhouse include *Lady Fredericka* by Somerset Maugham, to be given by the **Green Room Club** on 9th and 10th March, and Roger MacDougall's *To Dorothy a Son*, presented by the **Halifax Thespians.**

From the 23rd to 26th March at St. Peter's Hall, **The Southsea Shakespeare Actors** will be seen in *Henry V*.

Edward Wooll's *Libel* will be given by **Milmor Productions** at the Little Theatre, Ilford, Essex, from the 30th March to 2nd April. The play will be produced by Ian Milne.

The Bath Operatic & Dramatic Society, now in its 61st year, is producing *The Belle of New York* at the Theatre Royal, Bath, for one week, from 28th March to 2nd April.

On the 24th and 25th March at the Town Hall, Ballymena, N. Ireland, the **Mid-Antrim Drama Club** will present *The White Sheep of the Family* by L. du Garde Peach and Ian Hay. The production is to be directed by Ellis Quinn, who took part in the première of the play, when appearing with the Amersham Repertory Company during their summer season at the Little Theatre, Bangor, in 1953. This is the Club's second production of the season.

The Progress Theatre, Reading, will present *Macbeth* from the 1st to 6th April.

Principal Theatre activities at Toynbee Hall during March are as follows:—

3rd and 4th March—*The Happy Prisoner*, by Monica Dickens and John McNab: **The Bowaters (London) Dramatic Society.** Tickets obtainable from Mr. H. Henthorne, 72 Upper Ground, S.E.1.

12th March—*Triple Bill, 1955*: **The Query Players** and the **Islington Players.** Tickets from Miss Patricia Burke, 11 Lisgar Terrace, London, W.14. Tel: Fulham 1555.

(Continued overleaf)

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23rd and 26th March—Drama Festival: **Federation of Jewish Youth.** Particulars from Miss E. Cohen, 3 Kenneth Crescent, Willesden Green, London, N.W.2.

25th March—*Miranda*, by Peter Blackmore: **BDV Raleigh Dramatic Society.** Tickets from Mr. P. Hill, Godfrey Phillips Ltd., 112 Commercial Street, London, E.1. Tel: BIS. 2232.

29th March—*Quiet Night*, by Dorothy Blewett: **Friendly Centurions' Dramatic Society.** Tickets from Miss F. M. Brown, 7 Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.3., or Miss M. G. Hayman, 5 Queen Street, London, E.C.4.

31st March and 7th April—*The Man Who Came to Dinner*, by Moss Hart and George Kaufman: **The "54" Dramatic Club.** Tickets from Mr. R. D. Doig, Willis, Faber and Dumas Ltd., 54 Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.3.

It can now be announced that John Fernald, Marie Ney and Henry Sherek have graciously agreed to act as the final judges in the **Tavistock Repertory Company's** Full Length Play Competition, the closing date for which was 28th February. The competition has attracted scripts not only from all over Great Britain, but also from abroad. Two entries have been received from Buenos Aires.

The Nomad Players, Sutton, Surrey, are to give three performances of *Alf's Button* by W. A. Darlington, at Sutton Public Hall, on 24th, 25th and 26th March at 8 p.m. in aid of the Sutton Branch of the Infantile Paralysis Fellowship. Production by Alan Toms.

The Deanery Players are presenting *Caesar's Friend* by Campbell Dixon and Dermot Morrah on the 23rd, 24th and 25th March, in the Borough Hall, Godalming.

Hessle Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society are to present Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit* in the Town Hall, Hessle, on 30th and 31st March and 1st and 2nd April, with Sheila Waddington, Edna Parry, Kitty Savege and Graham Medd in the leading rôles.

We apologise for the announcement last month that *Someone Waiting* was to be performed by the **Green Room Club** at the Halifax Playhouse. The performance did not take place, as this play is not yet available to amateur societies.

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